



Agriculture and Environment
Committee

Media Release
Issued: 1 June 2017

Chair: Joe Kelly MP
Deputy Chair: Pat Weir MP

Parliamentary weeds inquiry coming to Hughenden

Programs to eradicate Prickly Acacia will be under the spotlight at a parliamentary inquiry in Hughenden later this month.

Chair of the Queensland Parliament's Agriculture and Environment Committee and Member for Greenslopes, Joe Kelly MP, warns that weeds such as Prickly Acacia pose a major threat to the State's agriculture sector, as well as high-value environmental areas.

"Prickly Acacia is one of three agricultural weeds we are looking at as case studies for our inquiry into the impact and control of invasive plants in Queensland," Mr Kelly said.

"It was first introduced into Queensland for shade and fodder for stock, but is now regarded as one of the worst weeds in Australia because of its economic and environmental impacts and potential to spread.

"We have already heard from local stakeholders about the threat to the grazing industry and the regional economy. Prickly Acacia has proven to interfere with mustering, movement of stock and access to water. In addition, the trees have been shown to reduce grass production by out-competing fodder crops for water, with the canopy cover significantly cutting pasture growth. This results in high costs to the grazing industry due to the impact on pasture production, control costs and decline in rural land values."

At the public hearings the committee will hear about the effectiveness of control programs run by councils, NRM groups and Biosecurity Queensland, the agency charged with managing Prickly Acacia and other weeds in Queensland, including the development of bio controls.

The committee will report its findings to the Queensland Parliament later this year. The committee's roundtable meeting and public hearings will be held from 12.30pm at the Diggers Entertainment Centre.

The committee has published an [information paper](#) for the inquiry.

For media comment: please contact the committee Chair, Joe Kelly MP on (07)3414 2100

For background information: please contact the committee secretariat on (07) 3553 6662, via email at: aec@parliament.qld.gov.au or visit the committee's webpage at: www.parliament.qld.gov.au/aec.

The inquiry terms of reference and information on the three weeds for case studies follows:

Terms of reference for the inquiry

The committee will investigate and report to Parliament on the impacts of invasive plants (weeds) and their control in Queensland, particularly whether:

- the responsibilities of local governments in relation to the control of prohibited, restricted and invasive plants imposed under s.48 of the *Biosecurity Act 2014* are reasonable, and local governments are meeting those obligations
- programs for the control of weeds on Crown land administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines are effective
- Biosecurity Queensland's weeds programs, including biological controls and new technologies, are adequately funded and effective at controlling weeds
- environmental programs administered by the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection impact favourably on weed control programs administered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and local governments, and
- federal, state and local government weeds programs are coordinated to maximise their achievements and to have a whole of government approach.

Case studies

Prickly acacia is regarded as one of the worst weeds in Australia because of its economic and environmental impacts and potential to spread. Originally introduced to Queensland from India as a shade and specimen tree, each medium-sized prickly acacia can produce as many as 175,000 seeds per year.

At present over 6.6 million hectares of arid and semi-arid areas of the state are infested. If left unchecked, prickly acacia could spread to vast areas of grasslands and woodlands throughout Australia.

Giant rat's tail grass arrived in Australia in contaminated grass seed. It is a tough, perennial grass that grows up to 1.7m tall with seed heads up to 45cm long and 3cm wide.

Rat's tail grasses can produce up to 85,000 seeds per square metre in a year. Seeds can remain viable for up to 10 years. When mature, giant rat's tail grass has tough leaves which make it unpalatable to stock. It quickly dominates native grasses.

Fireweed is a native of Madagascar and Southern Africa and may have started in Australia as a garden plant. It has yellow daisy-like flowers and grows to 50cm tall in ideal conditions.

Fireweed is an annual perennial, and toxic to livestock. It spreads quickly and competes strongly with pasture grasses. Each plant can produce over 10,000 seeds during the growing season.

Fact sheets for weeds in Queensland are available from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries website: www.daf.qld.gov.au



Prickly acacia



Giant rat's tail grass



Fireweed
